

2026 WI Land+Water Conference Breakout Sessions

Wednesday, March 4, 1:45-2:45pm	
<p>Shifting Ground: Navigating Updates to Nutrient Management Planning. Nutrient management planning in Wisconsin is entering a new phase with updates and changes that will impact planning and compliance. This session will cover key updates regarding the P Index, NRCS SURGO data, RUSLE2 in SnapPlus and compliance considerations moving forward. We will additionally touch on differences in county-to-county implementation, working effectively with agronomists, NMP submission deadlines, the transition to SnapPlus Version 3 and updates to the 590 Checklist. Whether you're writing plans or reviewing them, you'll leave with a clearer understanding of what's changing — and how to stay ahead of it. <i>Presenter: Andrea Topper, DATCP.</i> 1 Nutrient Management CEU</p>	<p>Watertown Waterways Improvement Program: A Local Water Quality Trading Program. The City of Watertown and Jefferson County LWCD developed a local water quality trading program to adhere to the city's Department of Natural Resources stormwater permit. The Watertown Waterways Improvement Program relies on the county's expertise and established relationships with property owners to design, model, implement and inspect conservation practices to reduce pollutant discharge to the Rock River and tributaries. The program will be explained: intergovernmental agreement, outreach, conservation practices, payment structure, and inspection. Information on the first successful trades will be shared as well as how the program is beneficial to the city and county. <i>Presenters: Patricia Cicero and Dave Hoffman, Jefferson County LWCD; and Maureen McBroom, City of Watertown.</i> 1 Soil & Water Management CEU</p>
<p>Ho-Chunk Nation DNR Projects and Opportunities for Collaboration. An inside look at projects Ho-Chunk DNR is involved with that affect both tribal and non-tribal lands and resources. Topics to be discussed include elk reintroduction efforts, prairie management, wolf management/advocacy, oak savanna restoration and many more. Learn about ways that your organization can work collaboratively with the Ho-Chunk Nation and other tribal governments. <i>Presenter: Brandon Bleuer, Executive Director, Ho-Chunk Nation DNR.</i> 1 Professional Development CEU</p>	<p>Thinking like a Prairie – Strategies for Advancing Perennial Conservation. Do Wisconsin prairies sequester soil carbon? How can prairies inform conservation in Wisconsin? What conservation practices are dominant in the state and why? What does it take to transform agroecosystems? Join panelists to explore these questions and consider strategies for advancing perennial conservation. <i>Panelists: Mia Keady, PhD, Research Associate, UW-Madison; Serge Koenig, Conservation Technician, Sauk County; Alex Steussy Williams, Outreach Specialist, Grassland 2.0 Academy.</i> 1 Sustainability CEU</p>
<p>Artificial Intelligence Policies and Elements of Governance. As artificial intelligence tools become more common in public service, counties face new opportunities—and new challenges. This session will explore key considerations for developing clear, practical AI policies that support innovation while protecting data privacy, ensuring transparency, and maintaining public trust. Learn foundational elements of effective AI governance, examples of emerging county approaches, and steps to help your organization prepare for thoughtful and responsible AI adoption. <i>Presenter: William L. Oemichen, J.D., Professor of Practice-Law/Local Government Law Educator, University of Wisconsin - Madison Division of Extension.</i> 1 Professional Development CEU</p>	

Wednesday, March 4, 3:15-4:15pm	
<p>Building Knowledge on Cover Cropping in Wisconsin through Farmer Led Citizen Science. In 2020, a collaborative effort was launched to gather fall cover crop biomass with the goal to provide better guidance on the effects cover crops have on soil erosion and nutrient loss. In 2022, farmers were asked to collect samples to analyze tissue nutrient uptake and forage value. A web-based dashboard was developed for users to review the data collected at each site. Join us as we summarize 5 years of data gathered from over 220 fields. We will demonstrate how to use the dashboard while engaging with farmers about the potential outcomes of incorporating cover</p>	<p>Not Just for Pretty Pictures: Drone Uses in Ecological Restoration. Drones are all over the news from annoying homeowners, invading countries, and invading our privacy. But how can drones actually be used for good? Join us to learn about how drones are doing good work restoring habitat via imagery, spraying, and seeding. We will discuss the laws that govern drone uses for both imagery and spraying and the technologies that pair with drones to provide thermal, LiDAR, multispectral, and automated analysis. We will also discuss our experiences using a spray drone to manage invasive species, lessons learned, and how to set up for a successful treatment.</p>

<p>crops. <i>Presenters: Dan Marzu, Northcentral Region Outreach Specialist, UW-Madison Extension Nutrient & Pest Management; Dr. Nicole Tautges, Research Director, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute; and Mrill Ingram, Participatory Action Research Scientist, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute.</i> 1 Sustainability CEU</p>	<p><i>Presenter: Samantha Loutzenhiser, CERP, Project Manager, KCI TECHNOLOGIES INC.</i> 1 Precision Ag CEU</p>
<p>Managing Water Demand: Tools and Considerations for Local Decision Makers. As counties and communities evolve and grow, they may encounter proposals for new industries — including the emerging trend of data centers — that require resources, including water. Can the local area support these increased demands, both now and into the future? This presentation explains how these questions can be evaluated through the regulatory framework, statewide water use information, and planning tools that support informed decision making. <i>Presenter: Adam Freihoefer, Water Use Section Manager, DNR.</i> 1 Soil & Water Management CEU</p>	<p>What I’ve Learned, Where I’m Going: Career Pathways in Conservation. Sponsored and presented by the Young Conservation Professionals Network, this interactive session explores the real stories, lessons, and turning points that shape careers in conservation. Experienced staff and mentors will share insights, career do’s and don’ts, and the skillsets that helped them grow in an evolving field. Participants will engage with real-world “career scenario” challenges and reflect on their own next steps. Whether you’re new to conservation or looking to chart your future path, you’ll leave with inspiration, practical ideas, and a strengthened sense of community. 1 Professional Development CEU</p>
<p>Permitting Hydrologic Restoration Projects. With the new Hydrologic Restoration General Permit now available, DNR staff will share which types of projects qualify, what is required for a permit application, and examples of projects already underway. <i>Presenters: Tom Nedland and Crystal Von Holdt, DNR.</i> 1 Engineering PDH 1 Soil & Water Management CEU</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, March 5, 8:00-9:15am</p>	
<p>Follow the Leader: Untapping Core Leadership Competencies. This session highlights the essential skills great leaders use to drive performance, trust, and accountability. Participants will explore key leadership competencies, identify common mistakes—like unclear expectations and avoidance of tough conversations—and leave with practical strategies to lead with clarity, purpose, and confidence. <i>Presenter: Brad Gingras, Superior Strategies.</i> 1 Professional Development CEU</p>	<p>Advocating for Conservation. At a time when partisanship dominates much of our political discourse, county conservation is a topic that has bipartisan support. <i>Join former state legislators and current members of the Rock County Land Conservation Committee Debi Towns and Janis Ringhand</i> for a discussion on how to be effective advocates for conservation at the county and state levels, how to work "across the aisle," and how we might arrive at a Wisconsin that features well-managed and productive farms, and clean water. WI Land+Water contract lobbyist <i>Shawn Pfaff</i> will moderate. 1 Professional Development CEU</p>
<p>Streambank Protection – Design and Documentation. Planning and design documentation for the NRCS Conservation Practice Standard <i>580 Streambank Protection</i> can be extensive and confusing at times. This session will go through the main components and important aspects of the design spreadsheet, what qualifies as a “critical site,” and what type of planning and design documentation is needed and when. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask the panel of presenters questions and discuss scenarios at the end as time allows. <i>Presenters: Taylor Smagacz and Dennis Marquardt, Jr., DATCP; and Wes Kotila, Outagamie County LCD.</i> 1 Engineering PDH 1 Soil & Water Management CEU</p>	<p>Grazing in Action: Insights from Wisconsin Grazing Specialists. Join grazing specialists for an engaging session on practical strategies for pasture and livestock management. Speakers will cover grazing principles, common challenges in Wisconsin systems, and tools to support producers through on-the-ground technical assistance. This session will also highlight the launch of the Grazing Academy and how it will strengthen statewide capacity for conservation-minded grazing. This session offers actionable insights you can bring directly to your work with landowners. <i>Presenters TBA.</i> 1 Sustainability CEU</p>

Accessing Extension Groundwater & Geologic Resources for County Staff and Local Officials. In this session, presenters will share how Extension is working with local communities to protect and improve groundwater. You'll see how easy it is to learn about private well water quality in your area and explore maps of the water table and local geology. Many people are surprised by just how much information is already available! For communities that want to dig deeper, presenters will also show ways to build stronger well water quality datasets or even create county-specific maps that highlight areas more vulnerable to groundwater issues. The session will feature hands-on demonstrations of the new and improved WI Well Water Quality Viewer and WGNHS Mapping Status Portal, giving you practical tools to better understand and manage water resources in your community. Presenters will also highlight recently completed and ongoing groundwater mapping efforts in counties across Wisconsin. *Presenters: Sue Swanson, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey and Cayla Cavey, Center for Watershed Science and Education.* **1 Soil & Water Management CEU**

Thursday, March 5, 9:45-11:00am

What to do when things go wrong. An interactive workshop providing participants with an opportunity to explore finding solutions when implementing conservation practices does not go according to plan. Presenters will share real-world situations – stream crossings, embankment pipes, grassed waterways and concrete work – and participants will have the chance to work with small groups to find solutions. *Presenters: Ketty Clow, Chippewa County; Travis Buckley, Kelli Neitzel, Taylor Smagacz, and Peter Wuzer, DATCP.* **1 Engineering PDH 1 Soil & Water Management CEU**

Make an Impact with Classroom Presentations. Step into the classroom! This interactive session features four hands-on stations where you'll explore creative ways to teach students about conservation topics like groundwater, watersheds, soil health, and more. Get inspired, gather resources, and spark new ideas for your next presentation. *Presenters: Haillie Passow, Trempealeau County DLM; Kim Warkentin, WI Land+Water; Alexis Faul and Amber Cannon, Fond Du Lac County LWCD; Olivia Fischer, Green Lake County LCD; and Laura Grunwald-Rentmeester, Sheboygan County PC.* **1 Professional Development CEU**

Understanding Shoreline Riprap. Hear from DNR biologists and water regulations staff about the history and permitting of shoreline riprap. The session will explore its impacts on water quality, habitat, and aquatic life, and will discuss alternative approaches to shoreline protection. *Presenters (TBD) DNR lakes biologists and water regulations staff.* **1 Soil & Water Management CEU**

Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) Benefits: For New and Mid-Career Employees. Are you a new employee or someone who still has at least 5 years to go before you can retire? It's never too early to start planning for a secure retirement. Learn how to maximize your WRS benefits. **1 Professional Development CEU**

Strategies for Silvopasture: Adding Shade, Timber, Nuts & More. Discover practical, proven ways to integrate trees into pasture systems for greater resilience and profitability. This session goes beyond practice standards to showcase three real-world silvopasture models that deliver shade, timber, and nut production—without sacrificing forage performance. Yes, tree protection methods will also be revealed! Learn how strategic tree integration can unlock new revenue streams, strengthen livestock comfort, and elevate the value of the farms you support. *Presenter: Julie Hager, Agroforestry Technical Assistance Provider & Grazing Specialist, Savanna Institute.* **1 Sustainability CEU**

Thursday, March 5, 1:15-2:30pm

Taking Your Partnership to Light Speed Returns! This popular session is back and better than ever! Successfully navigating a conservation department through the asteroid field of today's funding shortfalls and resource concerns requires respect, collaboration, and communication (even when you speak different languages). Hear lessons learned from experienced and savvy "pilots" in this stellar session on strengthening the LCC/LCD partnership. *Panelists: Tracy Arnold, Portage County LWCD; MaryJo Gingras, Ashland County LWCD; Scott Frank,*

Advancing NPS Land Conservation Goals through Effective State Partnerships. Learn how state programs and partnerships can advance county land conservation goals in this interactive session. Attendees will be invited to ask questions, share feedback, and will leave with helpful reference materials in-hand. Following an overview of DATCP and DNR Nonpoint Source programs, a cross-organizational panel will answer common questions, address hot topics, and highlight real world examples. Panelists will include DNR Nonpoint Source staff,

<p><i>Shawano County LCD; Meg Turville-Heitz, Jefferson County LCC; Mike Hofberger, Calumet County LWCC; and Brian Holt, Walworth County LCC. 1 Professional Development CEU</i></p>	<p>DATCP staff, and Dunn County Conservationist Chase Cummings. This session is well suited for recent hires and seasoned professionals alike – please join us for an engaging discussion about how we can work better together! <i>Moderators/panelists: Alex Elias, Agency Liaison, DATCP; Jess Schoen, Nonpoint Source Program Coordinator, DNR; and more TBA. 1 Professional Development CEU</i></p>
<p>Developing Joint Development Agreements. Why are we seeing fast growth in utility scale solar and wind projects in Wisconsin? What are counties’ options for responding? In this session we’ll discuss why renewables are growing and then do a deep dive with a panel of county staff who have developed and negotiated solar joint development agreements (JDAs) including who to involve, topics to include, what specific JDA content is proving helpful and problematic, and enforcement. We’ll also introduce a newly created summary of solar JDAs around the state as a resource for you if a solar project comes your way. <i>Presenter: Lynn Markham - Center for Land Use Education - UW-Madison Division of Extension. 1 Professional Development CEU</i></p>	<p>Edge of Field Practices/Innovative Conservation. This presentation showcasing phosphorus removal systems, agriculture storm water capture strategies that reduce peak flows to streams and improve water quality. Highlighting innovation through watershed modeling, nutrient-capturing media, drain tile treatment systems and water quality benefits. This session to discuss irrigation opportunities that complement conservation goals for landowners that enhance drought resilience, collaboration with farmers and landowners, permitting partners, and staff to streamline implementation, funding, and long-term maintenance. <i>Presenters: Wes Kotila and Jeremy Freund, Outagamie LCD; Matt Woodrow, DATCP; and Moderator Sam Welch, Outagamie LCD. 1 Engineering PDH 1 Precision Ag CEU</i></p>
<p>REAL Talk: Refine, Engage, Adapt, and Land Your Message. Ready to put your conservation messaging to the test? This interactive workshop hosted by the <i>WI Land+Water Outreach Committee</i> will bring communicators face-to-face with their audience—farmers, landowners, and community members—to practice their pitches in a live setting. Using proven frameworks like values-based messaging, you'll craft your message, then deliver it to our panel for honest feedback. Whether you're seeking funding, building partnerships, or promoting a practice, this is your chance to refine your approach with the people who matter most. Leave with a stronger message and the confidence to deliver it. 1 Professional Development CEU</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, March 5, 3:00-4:15pm</p>	
<p>Why Culverts Matter: Designing for Fish, Floods, and the Future. Poorly designed culverts threaten both Wisconsin’s stream ecosystems and public safety, but practitioners from across the state are using proven techniques and publishing new resources for building flood resilient and fish friendly culverts. <i>Presenter: Chris Ester, US Forest Service. 1 Engineering PDH 1 Soil & Water Management CEU</i></p>	<p>US Fish and Wildlife Service Partnership Program. Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff will provide an overview of the Service’s private lands program, including current priorities and partnership opportunities. The session will feature case studies and project highlights from across the state. <i>Presenters: USFWS staff. 1 Professional Development CEU</i></p>
<p>Investigating Compliance with Ag Runoff Rules (NR 151). The red, yellow, and green flags are making a comeback! Practice investigating NR 151 compliance in a no-pressure atmosphere. Participants will be divided into groups to navigate made-up scenarios. Experienced, new, and all staff in between are encouraged to join the conversation. Watch for a special emphasis this year on cropland performance standards and cost sharing eligibility. <i>Presenter: Ben Uvaas, DNR. 1 Soil & Water Management CEU</i></p>	<p>Beyond the Clipboard: Creative Approaches to Citizen Science. From selfie stations to stream monitoring, volunteers are powering conservation efforts across Wisconsin. Panelists will share what makes their citizen science programs thrive and how you can turn volunteer enthusiasm into actionable data. Learn creative strategies to engage your community, discover how to tap into existing datasets for management decisions, and share your own experiences. Whether you host a trail camera, coordinate volunteers, or want to learn more—bring your stories and questions. Come ready to swap strategies, successes, and lessons learned. <i>Presenters: Christine</i></p>

Anhalt-Depies and Mackenzie Glasford, Snapshot Wisconsin; Katy Bradford, Water Action Volunteers; and Elise Theiler, Chippewa County WAV Coordinator. **1 Professional Development CEU**

Protecting What We Can't See: Municipal–Farmer Partnerships Drive Conservation and Wellhead Protection. Municipal wellhead protection excels when communities and producers work together to protect and improve the groundwater resources they share. This session highlights how conservation practices—such as perennial grasses, prairie strips, cover crops, buffers, and soil-health driven systems—can be strategically implemented within wellhead protection areas to improve groundwater quality and strengthen local water security. Participants will hear examples of successful collaborations between municipalities and farmers, explore tools for identifying priority protection zones, and learn practical approaches for engaging agricultural partners in voluntary conservation efforts. From small towns to rapidly growing communities, the session illustrates how integrating land-use planning, hydrogeologic data, and on-the-ground conservation practices creates a proactive, cost-effective defense for public water supplies. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies for building relationships, navigating local governance, and designing conservation programs that align municipal water goals with the realities of working farms. *Presenters: Kirstie Heidenreich, County Conservationist, and Marathon County Conservation staff; and Andrew Aslesen, Source Water Specialist, Wisconsin Rural Water Association.* **1 Soil & Water Management CEU**

Friday, March 6, 8:00-9:00am

Solar Watering Systems, Design, and Implementation.

Providing power to remote areas can be challenging and cost prohibitive. This presentation will go into designing reliable solar systems where connection to the power grid is unfeasible. Covered material will include pump sizing, water system sizing, solar panel sizing, electrical storage, and pump house design. *Presenter: Kyle Andreae, Wood County LWCD, and moderated by Ketty Clow, Chippewa County LCFMD.* **1 Engineering PDH**
1 Sustainability CEU

Supporting the ecological and economic opportunities of dairy heifer grazing.

Dairy heifer grazing presents a real opportunity to get more continuous living cover deployed on the land, reducing nutrient run off and erosion and building soil health. Well managed grazing systems can produce quality animals for milking herds and importantly support solid farm enterprise economics. This session will detail the watershed benefits and lay out the technical assistance, both forage and animal production, as well as business enterprise development available to support dairy heifer grazing. *Presenters: Sarah Lloyd, UW-Madison, Grassland 2.0; Sara Walling, Clean Wisconsin.* **1 Sustainability CEU**

Enhanced wakes: understanding ecosystem impacts, and local management approaches.

Enhanced wakes from watercraft are an issue of growing concern for many waterfront communities, and local governments. In this session, *Dept. of Natural Resources staff* will present the scientific background on some of the ecosystem impacts from enhanced wakes, and counties will share real-world approaches that have been utilized to balance wake-enhancing watercraft operation with natural resources protection. **1 Soil & Water Management CEU**

Caring for the Land and for Yourself.

Full description forthcoming. We know that this is a challenging time to be a conservation professional. We're excited to welcome back Dr. Emily Walz to lead another breakout session covering mental health, climate change, and conservation. *Presenter: Emily Walz, MD, Psychiatrist, Sixteenth Street Community Health Center.* **1 Professional Development CEU**

What is Soil Health Anyway? How Do We Use It, and How Do We Measure Change? Our soil is a vital, living ecosystem. As the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) states, soil health is defined by "the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans." Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. But what exactly is soil health? How do we apply soil health concepts in our work as conservationists, and how do we know if we are making a difference? Join *Randy Zogbaum, DATCP Soil Health Program Manager*, for an engaging exploration of these questions and more. **1 Sustainability CEU**

Friday, March 6, 9:15-10:15am

Soils Investigations for Engineering Conservation Practices.

Soil borings? More like soil excitings! Let's dig into soil investigations. When are they needed? Who is qualified to review them? What forms do I need? Representatives from DATCP and NRCS will provide an overview of various soil sampling efforts while covering the ins and outs of each. Presenters: *Jeremy Zeigler, Jae Sutherland, and Krista Bryan, NRCS – full list TBD.* **1 Engineering PDH 1 Soil & Water Management CEU**

Own the Room: Practical Public Speaking Skills for Conservation Professionals.

Public speaking doesn't have to mean standing behind a podium. In this interactive session, you'll explore how to connect with your audience, manage nerves, and communicate with confidence and authenticity. Through real-world examples and practical strategies, you'll learn to read the room, tailor your message on the fly, and own your presence as a speaker, whether you're leading a meeting, giving a presentation, or talking to a community group. Presenter: *Michael Hook, WI Land+Water.* **1 Professional Development CEU**

Tree-Ring Perspectives on Wisconsin Water Resources: Oaks, redcedars, and 1200 years of climate history.

Come learn about the emerging network of tree-ring data that spans the past millennium and is now providing annually-resolved insights on a suite of hydrologic variables, from drought and groundwater elevations in southwest Wisconsin, to rainfall over the Corn Belt, to a nascent gridded drought reconstruction that will span the Great Plains. Within the information about past climates carried by these trees are woven the influences of shifting culture and landuse, with implications for how we approach land and water conservation in the Midwest. Presenter: *Evan Larson, Ph.D., UW-Platteville.* **1 Professional Development CEU**

Making Headlines: Connecting with the Media. Full description forthcoming, but don't miss this chance to connect with scientist turned journalist, Caitlin Looby. Before landing in Wisconsin covering the Great Lakes and environment for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Caitlin taught science communications at the University of Minnesota. You'll get practical advice for building stronger relationships with journalists and learn how to make your stories stand out by centering the people at the heart of your work. Presenter: *Caitlin Looby, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.* **1 Professional Development CEU**

Securing cranes, and so much more: a 10-year vision for cranes, wetlands, and communities. For 50 years, crane conservation has been a beacon of hope in a fractured world that has lost 3 billion birds and millions of acres of wetlands and grasslands. Cranes are revered by many cultures on each of the five continents where they live. They serve as sensitive indicators for the health of wetlands where they breed and feed, and the surrounding watersheds that nourish them. They are powerful flagships for creating protected areas that support a rich diversity of lesser-known species. They are global ambassadors uniting people for conservation action across borders and political divides.

The International Crane Foundation's new 10-Year Strategic Vision (2025–2035) is an ambitious plan to secure all 15 crane species through integrated approaches that blend biodiversity conservation with community development and climate-resiliency. Our vision is about much more than cranes—it is about revitalizing wild and working lands in partnership with the people who depend on these landscapes. We'll explore lessons learned from the past 50 years of conservation action and scan the horizon for emerging challenges and opportunities in the decade ahead.

We'll share stories from crane conservation projects worldwide through which we learn, adapt, and scale-up our impact. Safeguarding cranes and other wildlife through water tanks, mattresses, and mushroom farming for some of the poorest communities of East Africa. Employing local communities in every aspect of wetland management—invasive species control, scouting patrols, rotational grazing, field research and more—to restore the most important floodplain in southern Africa. In Vietnam, linking the reintroduction of Sarus Cranes to new protected areas with organic rice agriculture buffer zones. Testing One Health strategies for people, wildlife, and our environment to mitigate the global spread of avian influenza. For endangered Whooping Cranes, managing wetlands, water, powerlines, and shootings to secure every link in the chain of migration from northern Canada to the Texas coast. Finding innovative solutions for crop damage by Sandhill Cranes in Wisconsin that reduce human-wildlife conflict with farmers worldwide. Presenter: *Dr. Richard Beilfuss, International Crane Foundation.* **1 Professional Development CEU**